2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

Headmen and Administrative Boundaries

631 As we have seen, the Nilgiri Plateau is divided into four areas, Todana:ḍu, Me:kuna:ḍu, Poraṅga:ḍu and Kundena:ḍu.[1] In each of these divisions are several communes,[2] each made up of from one to forty contiguous villages. These villages may belong to any one of the seven plateau phratries, and one of the villages, not necessarily the largest or even of the highest phratry, has permanent precedence and gives its name to the entire commune. Its headman is also head[3] of the entire commune; under him are the headmen[4] of all the other villages. The divisional headman[5] is (643) a hereditary position in one family of a chosen village. From time immemorial the village headman of Tu:ne:ri, in Todana:ḍu, has been paramount chief[6] of the entire Badaga community.[7] Because of the extent of their duties the divisional headmen and the paramount chief do not also serve as headmen at all other levels. (4728) All of these offices are normally inherited patrilineally, save when the eldest son is deemed unfit and another relative is chosen by the council to replace him.

692 At each of these levels—village, commune, division and entire community—the relevant headman can call together a council (693) (*manta*) of respected men to judge disputes. Every case has to pass up this hierarchy of councils, so that only when lower councils have failed to solve them satisfactorily do the most complicated land and marriage disputes and murder cases reach the paramount council. A dissatisfied disputant may appeal a council's decision to the next higher level of council, but high-level headmen check that a case brought to them has first passed through the lower-level councils. Badaga law has the unusual provision that if a higher-level headman considers the judgment given at a lower level to be in error he can fine the headman responsible. This was in the past an effective check against favouritism.

Procedure

692 In a dispute between two parties from the same village their 693 headman called a council of the heads of each household, one of whom would be his deputy (*gaundike*). Where litigants came from (622) neighbouring villages the case would first be heard by the commune council, which was made up of all its village headmen.